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C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 002103

SIPDIS

STATE FOR IO/PHO, NEA/IPA, WHA/CAN, AND EAP/J

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/23/2013

TAGS: [KPKO](#) [PREL](#) [IS](#) [SY](#) [CA](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: UNDOF: DRAWDOWN OF CANADIAN CONTINGENT

REF: (A) STATE 210528 (B) OTTAWA 1779

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Brian Flora,  
Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Canada confirmed to us that is does intend to reduce its contribution to the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) over the next 12 months, but that it will not do so before ensuring adequate backfill by others. We discussed reftel (A) concerns with Barbara Martin, Director of Foreign Affairs' Peacekeeping Division, including reports from third parties that Canada plans to withdraw from UNDOF. Martin said that Canada has explicitly told UN, Israeli and Syrian officials that Canada intends to draw down, but not withdraw altogether, from UNDOF. Martin said Canada hopes to end up with approximately 40 "front-line observers" in UNDOF a year from now, with Canadian specialty support personnel being replaced by other countries, most likely Japan.

¶2. (C) Martin emphasized that Canada will not take any steps that will undermine the UNDOF mission. She said the GoC will be working closely with the UN to identify backfill, and that the drawdown of Canadian personnel will be done in consultation with the UN. She said that Japan has expressed interest in playing a more prominent role in UNDOF, and that Canada's decision should give Japan the impetus to move forward. Canada will continue encouraging Japan to do so, and will approach other countries as well if needed.

¶3. (C) Martin said that Canada continues to support UNDOF, but that there are a number of other countries capable of filling the support roles that the Canadian contingent is now providing. After 30 years in UNDOF, Canada is looking to free up such specialty personnel for other missions.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: Given Canada's strong commitment to peace in the Middle East, we do not believe it will leave UNDOF in the lurch. We will stay in close touch with the GoC over the issue of backfill, and would be interested in USUN and Embassy Tokyo's thoughts on an increased Japanese role. Canada's drawdown plans reflect a more general desire to rationalize the Canadian Forces' presence, focusing more on higher-impact missions. They also reflect the fact that the Canadian Forces are badly overstretched, a problem that is being exacerbated by the deployment of 1800 troops to ISAF.  
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